

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen!

People of Turkmenistan still face barriers when they move not only through the state border but also when they attempt to move inside of the country.

These barriers were artificially created by dictatorial regime of Saparmurat Niyazov with the purpose of informational isolation of Turkmenistan, and in order to minimize the influence rendered on the country by the neighboring states.

The president of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Niyazov still manages to play games with the international community taking theatrical half measures like the cancellation of exit visas. Unfortunately, some people take these actions of the dictator seriously, and completely fail to pay attention to the fact that in reality the people of Turkmenistan have less and less freedoms.

Existence of the so-called "black list" was mentioned already many times. According to this list citizens of Turkmenistan are divided into two categories: those who are "allowed" to leave the country and those who are "not".

What's worse is that seeing a weak response on the part of the international community Turkmen authorities are acting with more impunity. There were cases when people were taken off the flight without any reason. Those few who manage to leave Turkmenistan can testify to it.

I shall give you a following example: the OSCE Center in Ashkhabad informs that there are 4 human rights NGO's functioning in Turkmenistan. Probably such NGO's really exist because their representatives are registered as participants of the OSCE human rights meetings on a regular basis. However, none of the human rights activists from Turkmenistan were able to come in July of this year to Vienna, and now to Warsaw. They were simply not allowed to leave the country.

Much less is known about violations of the right to freedom of movement inside of the country, simply because information rarely leaves the country. However, I shall mention some of the known facts: citizens of Turkmenistan willing to travel to frontier areas of the country are obliged to get a special permit, the process which takes up to several weeks. This situation is more complicated due to the fact that employees of the law enforcement bodies of Turkmenistan take bribes from people wishing to visit their relatives

in other regions of the country. For example, for the right to go from Ashkhabad to Tashauz people are forced to pay the amount equal to their monthly wage.

Moreover, the situation with the freedom of movement is aggravated also by the fact that consulates of the foreign countries, including the countries of the European Union, unfortunately, play according to the rules of Niyazov. The procedure of obtaining of Schengen visas has become tougher in comparison with the recent years to the point of irrationality. Citizens of Turkmenistan, wishing to visit Europe, are supposed to present an enormous amount of different documents. First of all, this affects simple people, while officials of the Turkmen regime have no problems with getting a visa. In our opinion, this way the OSCE-participating states only help dictator Niyazov!

The situation with the right to freedom of assembly and association in Turkmenistan is not better. People of Turkmenistan are intimidated to the point when they are afraid of each other. Independent public organizations do not exist, trade unions are liquidated, student's meetings are forbidden. People of Turkmenistan can use their right to freedom of assembly and association only when they gather to read Ruhnama, but even such meetings are being closely watched by Turkmen law enforcement bodies.

The Republican Party of Turkmenistan, the opinion of which I express here, agrees that OSCE does not have mechanisms to apply direct pressure upon dictatorial regime of Saparmurat Niyazov. In such situation the authorities of Turkmenistan should be constantly reminded of their commitments in the frameworks of the OSCE and OSCE should at last demand from Turkmenistan to fulfill its obligations.

We urge the OSCE-participating states to consider such the issue of using sanctions regarding Turkmenistan in the framework of the European Union and the United Nations. It is absolutely necessary to admit that gross violations of the rights of Turkmenistan's people should become a subject of a serious international trial.